

# HOME AND THE SCHOOL

## THE STORY OF INDIAN LIFE AND EDUCATION

BY

Prof. M. M. Gidvani, M. A.,  
Diploma in Education (London).

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Still barred thy doors! the far East glows,  
The morning wind blows fresh and free.  
Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
Awaken also thee ?

*Toru Dutt.*

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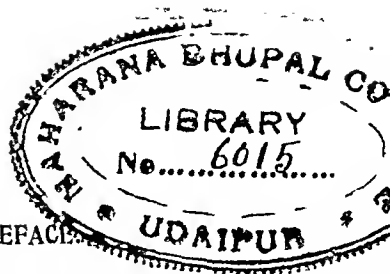
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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

During the first years of my career as a teacher, a conviction grew on me that all was not well with our educational system. I felt that the spirit of it was entirely wrong and that "the school-coach should not only be better-horsed but brought entirely on a new track." This conviction matured in later years, specially during the period of my training in Pedagogics in London, under the distinguished educationist, Professor John Adams, Principal of the London Day Training College. What impressed me most in English Education, was the ferment, the spirit of dissatisfaction with "What Is", and a ceaseless activity full of courage and hope, to attain the "What Might Be." I realised that this spirit was lacking in our educational world. The existing system of education was not national. It was foreign in spirit and organisation. There was complete divorce of Education from Real Life, of the School from the Home. The examination system loomed large in the horizon and obscured the vital facts of life. It deadened the pupils' faculties instead of helping them to grow. It reduced Education to a Parrot's Training.

Inertia, 'no-change,' satisfaction, is stagnation, decay death. Dissatisfaction, ceaseless change is the parent of

all progress. But the former dominates all departments of our life,—social, educational and religious—and is the chief barrier to our progress. Tyrant-custom in India is hydra-headed. It manifests itself in various forms in the home, the school, the temple, and the state generally; in the rigidity of the curriculum no less than in the harshness of the dowry system; in child-widows and caste-dinners. I have attempted, feebly though it be, to give the reader an insight into the life, outer and inner, of the student, the teacher, and the parent. Hence the title “Homo and the School.”

Finally, a peaceful revolt against Parent-craft and Priest-craft, Teacher-craft and Caste-craft, in one word against Tyrant-custom, is the plea of the pages here presented.

M. M. GIDVANI.

BOMBAY, *October*, 1923.

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# HOME AND THE SCHOOL.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### SLAVE MENTALITY.

The Southcote School at Ghelabad had re-assembled after the winter vacation. Its new Head, Mr. Piperson, was a fresh arrival from England. He was middle-aged, tall, and well-built. He was enthusiastic for reform, "specially keen on athletics, cricket, football, and hockey" as the Government circular described him. Mr. Piperson was an assistant-master in a London school, when, thanks to his broad chest and love for football, an angel from the India Office flew with him and landed him in India. His first impressions were interesting. It is true that he found no nuggets of gold in the streets but there were compensations. His reception at school was grand. The masters salaamed him so reverently; they garlanded him so profusely. When he sat with his staff wasn't he like a little Nabob in a Durbar or a Godling with his votaries around him!

Mr. Piperson was a shrewd man but the names of his assistants gave him no end of trouble. He called Mr. Pestonji, Mr. Bhattacharya, but when corrected, would apologise readily and say "Yes. I remember now. You are Mr. Pestonji, a Sikh." On one occasion, Southcote had a cricket-match with the local Madressah. Mr. Piperson wonderingly remarked "But I thought Madras was in the South of India!"

The new Head's pet scheme was the "House System." This he explained to his staff one afternoon. "We have," he said, "in our schools what is called the House System. The school is divided into Houses, each of which is in charge of a House master. The houses rival each other in sports, studies, and conduct. Marks are assigned to these and the winning house awarded the school-flag for the week. Funny names are sometimes given to competitions, *e. g.* "Disc Duel," "Mental Melee," "Cane Criminals," "Cricket-Contests," "Spelling Scrummage," "Prize Points," "Gala Gains" (swimming), "Late Losses," etc.

The Houses are named after great Englishmen. *e. g.* Gladstone or Disraeli, Drake and Nelson, or Shakespeare and Milton. He then dwelt at some length on the advantages of the system, and invited suitable names for Southcote Houses. A youthful master rose to speak, but

a significant look from Mr. Pestonji, the senior master, silenced him. Another master, Mr. Baldev, a fresh recruit from the University, then rose and addressed the Head. But he had his coat-sleeve pulled from the back. But he continued, "Sir, I am sorry for the interruption but, as I began, I had my coat pulled from the back. I turned round to see if it was the school cat but I was surprised to find that it was my worthy friend, the senior master (suppressed laughter and another pull from Pestonji). I wish to suggest the name of Gokhale whom we all revere as a great man. I am sure the name will do honour to any house of our school." Venerable Mr. Pestonji could stand it no longer. "Sir," he loudly interrupted, "this is politics." The shrewd Englishman merely remarked, "Let the master propose any name he likes." The staff looked impressed. "But, Sir! consider the discipline of the school!" remonstrated Mr. Pestonji. No answer. "Sir, the Government circular No. 8709, dated the 10th June, clearly forbids politics in schools." Mr. Piperson was moved. He asked for the document. The senior master jumped out of the room. He ran across the corridor, past the class-rooms, into the office and startled the clerk out of his calculations. He demanded the circular. That worthy gentleman, the Karkun, looked a picture of ease and repose. He took out the pen, cleaned it against his hair, and put it on the top of his ear. He next gave a yawn,



the loudest he had given for months, leaned against the chair, and finally inquired "Did you want your pay?" The senior flew into a rage. "D....n your pay but let me have the circular No...." he cried, adding that the Sahib wanted it. "The Sahib!" cried the clerk, forgetting his hitherto assumed dignity. He literally jumped out of his chair. Unluckily, as he did so his dhoti was caught up in a nasty nail. He toppled over and spilt the ink on the table. His right leg went into the W. P. B., while his left foot was caught in a huge gum pot. The clerk was mortified, the senior was dismayed; for he had to bend low to extricate the foot. At last the famous paper was found. Embracing his fond treasure, the senior ran out of the office to the staff-room and hurled the infallible official scripture at Mr. Baldev. He won his case and proceeded to suggest names. Bompas, a retired Inspector, Rollis Royce, a collector, Kipton, an engineer, and Pardev, a Judge, were the eminent men chosen.

There was no dearth of names of great men of India. Four or five could easily have been found to adorn the traditions of the school and inspire its pupils' lives. But why blame the poor masters? Their mentality is not hard to understand. Passing out of schools and colleges, the one problem which a young Indian has to solve for himself is Livelihood. Business needs capital.

initiative, and influence. Law and medicine offer good scope for the ambitious but there will always be some peaceful souls who want a fixed income and no responsibility, men who will rather be guided than guide, men who love a pension in old age. These are India's clerks, deputies, and asst.-masters.

Once a job is obtained, the next anxiety is to retain it. Jobs are so difficult to get, and there are so few of them running. Recently, over five hundred applications were received from first class and second class M. A.'s from all over India, for six educational posts! The young Indian will not do anything with his hands; he cannot do it. His education never taught him that, or rather, it made him incapable of all manual work. incapable of working with his hands and earning his way in life. In other words it has made him an imbecile. Hence, to please the boss who runs the show and not to discharge the functions of his office with intelligence and honour, becomes the sole purpose in life of the new assistant. He can do this best by complete subordination, and taking the line of least resistance. Running counter to routine will not pay him. Why should he bother? Passive, mechanical obedience, is what is expected of him and he gives it. Should he have a little of idealism left in his nature, there is always the cold douche of experience

to cool him down. Another corrective is fear. A few lines from his boss's pen in the confidential reports, can make or mar him. He must bow to the routine. He must settle down as a dull, mechanical tool, an automaton, a machine as lifeless as the benches and chairs around him. He must become a Robot.

In justice to the masters of the Southcote School he said that they did want to suggest the names of Tagore, Bose, Nanak, Kabir, and similar worthies, but they could not speak out. This inability to "speak out" what one thinks and feels is the besetting sin of Indian life. We dare not think as we like, we dare not speak as we like. We tamely submit to dictation from parents at home, to bullying from teachers at school, to insolence from the "boss" in later life, to caste-craft, priest-craft, state-craft, and every other craft. Where is this miserable enslavement first bred? Where has the slave-mentality, so popularly talked about now, its first birth? In the schools, with the child's first "Yes, Sir." tame and timid. Repression in India begins not with the Black Act but with the Black-Board.

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## CHAPTER II.



### ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

The cause of slave mentality is fear. Its cure is fearlessness. Indian society affords a sorrowful example of the evil effects of fear ; fear of parents, of teachers, of social conventions, of employers, of religious dogmatism, of governments. A tame submission to tyranny is evident on all sides. The seed of this is sown in childhood. Woe-fully ignorant of the laws of child training Indian parents make a frequent use of threats, insults, abuse, and blows, to keep their children quiet and dutiful. One of the commonest features of an average home is inability of the parents to manage their children. This is only natural because they don't understand their ways. Frequently it happens that they beat their children in order that they should remain quiet. But the more children are beaten the more they cry till the situation becomes unmanageable. The hitherto submissive child becomes an opponent. His spirit revolts against the injustice of the punishment and he retaliates. The parent takes a mean advantage of the child's physical weakness and locks him up in a cell, or forces bitter chilies down his throat. This is bare truth. Only the other day a mother

heated a ladle and threatened to brand her child with it, and this because of a paltry fault! This is not only foolish but positively harmful, and it serves to show the extent of the Indian parent's ignorance. I once heard a "highly educated" Indian father, Principal of a College, call his son a fool. This is what no British parent would do. The much-maligned Westerners possess many qualities which we lack and would do well to copy. They know how to bring up their children. They respect them as much as they respect friends. This is what an English teacher says, "Be respectful to a child even if you think he is a fool or a knave." \* British children grow up in self-respect, manliness, and courage; ours in fear, diffidence, and what is worst of all, distrust of themselves. Parents, here, seem to regard children as their personal property which they can dispose of as they like. They might abuse the child as the college principal did, or they might shut him up in a dark room, terrify him with threats of wicked spirits, or red-hot irons. They little realise the harm they do to the children's body, mind, and soul. In the parent's first threat is cowardice bred. With the first successful breaking of the child's will is another slave added to India's ranks. For the life of him that child will never recover from that wicked interference

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\*Mr. Norman Macmann.

with the laws of his being. He will have nervous reactions similar to those of a dog, who, once pelted with stones, "bolts with tail between legs at the sight of man or boy bending suddenly to the ground."\* He will cower timidly at the sight of elders. He will learn to suppress truth. Fear will breed a host of evils in him. It will shrivel up his soul as frost does the tree. My very first observation as a teacher, was the action of fear in pupils. One of these, at my approach, suddenly covered his cheeks with the palms of his hands. It was a pity to see the fearful attitude of the boy. On being questioned as to why he did that, the boy timidly replied, "Sir. I thought you were going to beat me." Why I should beat the poor thing I could not understand, for he did his Exercise peacefully and well. But it was the memory of previous punishments, of cowardly blows dealt suddenly from the back, which inspired the instinctive movement described. As birds fear man, so do pupils fear teachers; and much it grieves my heart to know what man has made of man. At the present moment, the term "repression" is very commonly heard in India. It is applied solely in a political sense to interference with popular liberty. But is Governmental pressure the only repression in India? Is political tyranny the only tyranny that calls forth the

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\* "Education, Its Data and First Principles." Dr. T. P. Nunn  
Page 34.

spirit of resistance. of chivalry, and personal sacrifice ? Repression is visible on all sides, in all departments of Indian life. Nearly everybody is repressed. Tyranny in India is Hydra-headed. Repression, repression and suppression. everywhere. The new Ravana has ten heads and more. You cut off one. the others remain. The child's expansive instincts repressed by the parents and the teachers, the growing boy's aspirations stifled by the examinations and economic distress, the young girl's joyous spirit crushed by a consciousness of social inferiority, her being "not wanted" by the parents. the bride's sufferings at her mother-in-law's cruel usage. rudimentary rights of a human being.—free movement. free thought and speech. the joy life,—denied to her, subjection of widows to tyrannous social conventions. and forcing them to a life of misery, the no less cruel and suicidal policy of relegating millions of our countrymen to a position of social inferiority. ostracism. and consequent degradation, the relentless persecution of the caste and the priest, are not all these various forms of repression? Heads of the Demon Ravana ? Do these not demand a body of valiant knights who will attack the enemy at different points. redeem childhood from its chains, free girlhood from its bondage, rescue widows from their sorrow, elevate the "depressed," touch the "untouchable," and dethrone bastard tyranny from its place ?

May not the new Psychology of the West throw some light on Repression in Indian life ? I am neither a Freudian nor a Jungian, but I do believe that the main doctrine of the new psychologists *viz.* the influence the Unconscious mind exercises in determining the life and conduct of an individual, has a great deal of truth in it. The unpleasant experiences of early childhood are not forgotten but they are merely repressed back into the unconscious where they continue to remain and affect adversely the entire course of life. This ought to teach us how others, be they children, brides or widows, "touchables" or "untouchables," should be treated. The repressed "complexes" of these should provide a field for psychological research which will be both interesting and valuable.

Indian life presents many examples of the "Inferiority Complex." This too is first engendered in the home and the school. The children are then handicapped for life. They carry the feeling of inferiority wherever they go. In everybody they see,—a professor at the college, an employer at the office, a judge in the court, a stranger, in the bazar, a tram-conductor, or a ticket collector,—a "superior" who must be looked upto. They remain school-boys for life. Even as adults, the "boss" is their teacher.



I think obedience is a curse. It is a weapon of weak and foolish parents and teachers. I am out and out for disobedience. The child should be free to say and do what he thinks right. By what laws can we force him to obey commands which he thinks are not right? I should like to hear more of "No, I think differently from you" than of a tame "yes, this must be right because you say so," from the wife to the husband, from both to the Priest, from the daughter-in-law to the mother-in-law, from the "untouchable" to the "touchable," from the subject to the ruler, but first from the child to the parent and the teacher. An everlasting "yes" in the school means perpetual political bondage, it means a never-failing tyranny of custom, and an eternal reign of religious dogmatism. A child's bold "No" is a promise for the future—for another Luther or Lenin, for a Gandhi or a Tagore.

For obvious reasons, I like to see more of mischief in our schools and colleges. Our children are far too repressed, far too obedient to be mischievous. Have we any school follies like those we find in *Eric*, *Julien*, *Home*, or *Tom Brown's School Days*?

Incapacity for mischief is a sign of ill-health in the organism. It argues lifelessness. All honour to the hardworking scholar, the "honours" man, the weary

plodder ; but I prefer the shirker who protests when he does not follow, play's Badminton in preference to attending a dull lecture, fails in the terminal and the preliminary, but wins the medals at the sports. True it is that he is not quiet, obedient, and "well-behaved," but he needn't be all that. So long as he is "live" there is hope for him. He is bound to beat the "honours" men in the race of life. I propounded my theory of "Mischief" as a sign of health at a lecture in Bombay, and was glad to learn from Mr. K. Natrajan, who presided, that the late Mr. Justice Ranade held similar views. Presence of mischief implies presence of grit and a certain amount of independence. It connotes absence of fear. It is wholesome.

The problem of India's manifold repression could be solved by the teacher, and partly by the parent too. The teacher ought to encourage the creative self-activities of the child. He ought to help him to be self-dependent and autonomous. If Repression is the malady, Freedom is the remedy. The cure for Slave Mentality is Liberty, for Fear, Fearlessness.

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## CHAPTER III.

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### DEADUCATION IN INDIA.

Hari was Southcote's best scholar. His genius was many-sided. He was a mathematician and had genuine love for poetry. He always topped the class. His usual mark was 90% in all subjects except Maths. in which he invariably scored cent per cent. Hari was nothing short of a prodigy. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have ambition. This was summed up in three letters—I. C. S.

But Hari played no games. He talked but little and seldom laughed. His books were his best friends. Often when the school watched a cricket or hockey match the frail form of this scholar could be seen pacing the corridors, absorbed in study. Occasionally, when the crowd cheered a pretty stroke, he would turn round and again lapse into his work. The masters, seeing him, would remark "How clever but how frail!" It was the evening of Divali Day—the Festival of Lamps. The city was ablaze with illuminations. Throngs of merry-makers on foot, and in carriages, passed the bazaar and gazed at the splendour, the cloths of gold and silver, the

satin and brocade, the ornaments and jewellery, the song and dance parties, all vying with one another to celebrate the victory of King Rama over the Demon Ravana.

The homes were gaily decorated and presented a bright festive appearance. We lay our scene in one of them. Light, coloured paper lanterns, made by children, shone languidly and cast the reflections of the little zoo pasted on its sides, on the wall. The family priest had arrived and was preparing the ceremonial. It was a night for the worship of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The mother placed a few gold sovereigns and rupees on a brass-plate and kept the same before the Brahmin. The worshipped gold and silver, kept for several days, would bring wealth. The father and the mother touched the coins, and the latter called her boy from his studies to do the same. "Hari the Brahmin is waiting. Come and worship Laxmi. Can't you leave those dirty books on such a holy day as this?" The appeal was not ineffective; for, from an inner room of the house the frail form of the scholar appeared. He smiled and bowed before the priest, touched the gold, and disappeared. For Hari all the days were same. But he had, earlier in the day, taken a stroll through the bazaar; for Divali was a special Hindu holiday. He had seen the illuminations and returned back to his work. The matriculation

was fast approaching. Hari must not lose his first place. He must toil hard. Thus it was that "Hari" was lost in the matriculation candidate.

About mid-night, a low moan awakened the mother. Going to Hari's room she found him feverish. She woke up the father. He felt the pulse and thought it an attack of malaria. He spoke tenderly to his boy and consoled the mother. The latter, true to the best traditions of Indian womanhood, supplicated to the father to retire. She alone would watch. Throughout the night she sat by her child's bedside, watched, and prayed. Early in the morning the doctor was called. He pronounced it a case of malaria. The weakness was caused by hard work. He prescribed, advised complete rest, and departed.

That day the monitor of the Southcote School was absent. The master showed concern, so did all the boys ; for they loved Hari for his goodness as much as they respected him for his knowledge. One of them, Devinath, who was Hari's chum, volunteered to go and inquire. He saw the patient in his sick-bed and talked to him "I will soon be well" said the scholar. The boy returned and informed the anxious class.

The fever subsided after a week. But it left its effects. The doctor advised complete rest. Hari had not

touched books for a week but his eyes had wandered constantly and settled on them. Devinath called again. He sat for long and talked of the work done. Hari listened in silence. and then remarked "I shall soon be well." The next morning fever revived, for Hari had worked at the new sums overnight.

The doctor was called but the fever grew worse. The brain was affected. For several weeks the patient lingered, a doubtful pilgrim between life and death. The skill of the doctor, the father's care, and above all the unfailing solicitude, the tender devotion, the earnest prayers of the mother to the Almighty, prayers devoutly uttered during those anxious nights, to save her dear boy's life, all these were in vain. The all-avenging Goddess Kali of foreign import had her way. It was November 5th. The date caught the patient's fitful eye. "Mother to-day is the Matriculation day," he murmured. "Yes dear. Do not be anxious, my child. Trust in God. He alone will fulfil your wishes," she answered. "Father," the boy said "will I be overage for the I.C.S.?" "Be not anxious, child," said the father as he turned away to hide a tear. The pulse grew weaker and the patient delirious. Devinath arrived. Hari caught him by the hand and said "Do my friends remember me?"

I shall meet them some day. Give my reverence to the master." Saying this he recited in sweet clear tones "Thy will be done, O Lord" and expired.

The death gave a blow to the family, and shattered the hopes of the aged couple. It threw a spell over the whole school. The grief of the unsophisticated children's minds over the loss of a comrade has a pathos all its own. A solemn meeting of the whole school was held. The Head, presiding on the occasion, explained the object of the meeting. He was followed by Mr. Bhattacharya, the class master. This worthy gentleman had a tender regard and affection for the departed scholar. To him the loss was a personal one. His speech, therefore, was not a formal one. It had all the genuineness of feeling about it. His words were few but they moved the hearers to tears.

"In Hari we have lost not only a brilliant scholar but a saint. To me the loss comes as a personal blow for, can I forget the touching devotion I received from this heroic soul? Hari's was a loving heart. His friends do not know it but he invariably gave away his scholarships to a poor boy. On one occasion he came to me with a handkerchief containing four mangoes. "What are these" I asked. He blushed a little and said, "Sir,

I got some from a friend and brought these for you." Mr. Bhattacharya's voice was choked with sobs. He seemed visibly affected. He could speak no longer. The juvenile audience stood in solemn silence. This was broken by loud sobs. Devinath listened to the recital of his friend's qualities and burst into tears. He left the Hall. The school resolved to raise a permanent memorial to the departed friend, in the form of a library. Hari's parents handed over all the books of Hari to the school. They had no need for them.

This is no fiction, nor is it an exceptional instance. It gives a glimpse into the life of Indian youths and serves to illustrate how far the existing system of education, whose God is examination, undermines a whole nation. It kills the soul. Its greatest curse is Externalism. It takes the pupil wholly out of himself, to outward things with which he has not much concern. Nature made us to be, not to seem. Being not seeming ought to be the goal. The present system teaches otherwise and subverts Nature's plan. It takes the individual away from his true business, viz. that of growing, to attempting to possess, and accumulate, to compete and to outlive. "Learn in order to earn" is its sordid creed. The system originally designed as an instrument of diplomat-



has served its purpose admirably. They wanted clerks and assistants and the schools have supplied these by lakhs.

A clerkship in a government office being the goal, the school, the schoolmaster, the curriculum, in fact the entire educational machinery has been set in motion to enable pupils to attain the worthy object. Examinations have been devised as passports to these offices. Those who pass the Matric, the S. F. or S. L., the B. A. or the M. A., will be blessed ; the failed ones are damned for ever. It forces everyone, the prodigy and the dullard, the mathematician and the poet to fit in its cast-iron mould. Same subjects, same time-table, same methods, same examinations for all. Human children are treated like herds of goats and sheep in the class room, and, in a larger measure, when they are led to the examination-hall by the thousands.

Education in India is a wholesale exploitation of the child by the state, the parents, and the teachers. Each of these exploits him in turn for his selfish purposes. The state wants him as a clerk. He must learn the 3 R's, cram, and pass examinations. The parents want a wage-earner and a dowry-earner too. He must satisfy them. The teacher uses him as a foil to show off his work and

gain promotions. Thus it comes about that the learner is lost in the "examinee," the son is lost in the wage-earner, the citizen is lost in the clerk, and the human being is lost in the machine. It is all a circus show of well-trained ponies performing clever tricks to the sound of the trainer's whip before an admiring audience of parents and society!

Withal the soul of the child is impoverished till it dies. The Rajah finds his parrot cannot sing. It is dead. All the paraphernalia of the Rajah's educational system, the learned pundits, the costly libraries, the golden cage designed for the education of the parrot are in vain; for the poor thing is uncared for and dies. How beautifully has our poet, Rabindra, hit off the folly of the present system of education! His book "Parrot's Training" is a masterpiece of thought, satire, and humour. I should like every English-knowing Indian to make its acquaintance.

If nothing else, the educational system of which the pupil is a helpless victim, has done him this. It has externalised his outlook, given him a false standard of values, and thus given him a bad start for life. It has taught him to look outside himself for reward. At school he learns to value prizes and tests more than knowledge,

of his own self of which he remains in complete ignorance. Love for the petty and the sordid accompanies him throughout life. He concerns himself with things which least matter to him. He knows little of his body and less of his mind. He cares for neither. So long as he succeeds in his "cram," passes his tests, gets a job, retains the same, he cares little for what he himself is. His attitude towards knowledge is one of distaste, bred in the school and the college by the text-books and the examinations. Self-reform, home-reform, and social reform, are questions with which he has nothing to do. His own growth, spiritual growth for that alone is life, is alien to his thoughts. His masters never wanted that, nor his examiners nor his parents. In his obsession for examination results, he pays no heed to his health of the body and of the mind, and leaves aside the spirit; for he is not supposed to have any. Pupils who ought to be at the hill-stations, or in the country side and the nursing homes. bend double over their desks in narrow cells and "cram." They cram for a livelihood but lose their life in the attempt. Pale, low-chested. sunken-eyed, spectacled, curved-backed, dwarfed and stunted boys and girls. blank minds and starved souls, miserable wrecks cast adrift by the examination system, are these the materials where with to build India that is to be? Examination looms large in Indian life. The parents know its

value. A "Matric-Passed" son will not only earn thirty or forty rupees per month but he will bring them a dowry of rupees two thousand or more. He will raise their social status. The parents can walk with head erect and say "Our son has passed the Matriculation Examination!"

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### PARROT'S TRAINING. \*

Once I examined a class in Geography. The standard was 5th, age 15. It was supposed to have been a very successful lesson in Manual of Geography. Pages 10-12 *i. e.* 8 paragraphs. Assigning a fixed number of pages per day seemed to be the master's method. Questions revealed the fact that the pupils had learnt the lesson thoroughly well, stops, commas and semi-colons, all by heart. When questioned as to the meaning of "Large hurricanes blow in the country" the class was blissfully ignorant. Only one of them, the monitor, seemed to brighten up. With an eager show of hand he answered "Large sugarcanes grow there"! This was the geography they had learnt.

On another occasion a master gave what was pronounced an admirable lesson in English, Direct Method. This was in a Secondary Training College. The master taught the children names of different limbs and parts of the body, in English. He made no use of the Vernacular. His method consisted in this. He pointed out his nose and

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\*This is the title of one of Dr. Rabindranath's Works. But this whole chapter is my own.—The Author.

said "This is the nose." Then he made the class repeat. So with the eyes, the ears, the mouth. The next day the same class was taken by another teacher. According to the practice of the College, this master revised the previous day's lesson with the class. He asked a boy "Show me your 'Nose'" The boy pointed out his mouth. Another boy showed his hands when asked to show his feet. In a few minutes the master succeeded in demonstrating the utter futility of the Direct Method lesson in which the only faculty appealed to was the Memory. No ideas had entered the children's minds. Hence the sorry blank the next day. Proper use of the Vernacular would have produced permanent ideas. But that never occurred to the teacher, or what is more probable, he thought it a heresy to make use of the Vernacular.

It is a custom in Hindu homes to keep a tame parrot. In fact he is our popular pet. He is put in a beautiful cage, he is bathed, he is fed, and treated as a family member. In fact he is a child of the home. He receives his lessons too. Early in the morning the parrot is given a sacred bath in right Orthodox Hindu style and asked to repeat a holy hymn or mantra. The holy matron's exhortation is "My child, repeat the name of Ram, Ram and Ram." The parrot learns the lesson and repeats it morning,

evening and night. Do not our children do the same? Are they not 'parrots' who learn by heart a few facts and pass for learned?

Let us examine what school instruction in India amounts to. Take the Primary School. The "subjects" taught are History, Geography, Vernacular and Arithmetic. What is the method employed? Take History first. A text book of Indian History is used. Of this it is enough to say that it is difficult to decide which is worth the contents, the paper or the printing. Illustrations are conspicuous by their absence. The few that may be found are generally ugly. The books would have been better without them. There is nothing like the High Roads of History or the innumerable History Readers in English which contain reproductions in colour of famous paintings taken from various galleries. The method is much worse than the text-books. The children are reduced to the level of memorizing machines. A few pages are assigned as a lesson which they learn by heart. Undue emphasis is laid on dates of birth and death of Kings and nobles, of battles fought and won. Often the master says "Akbar was a great King," and, at his command, the class chants out the tune "Akbar was a great King." This is done several times. Then follows another sentence, "He abolished the Sati custom,"

which is dealt with similarly. Depend upon it the children know not what that Sati means. It is not uncommon for masters to relegate this chanting-ceremony task to the monitor who leads the chorus of harsh grating music of Indian History, while they take a mid-day siesta in the hot Indian summer. The teacher wants to draw his pay and fill in the hour anyhow and he does it. He deceives himself into supposing that he has taught the children History and done his duty by them. It is self-deception; but the parents, the Examiners and the Inspectors all believe that the pupils have learnt History. Ask the pupils. They have been bored to death by cram, and grind, miserable trash. What is more, the harm is permanent. The method has given them a permanent disgust for History. They hate it from the bottom of their heart, for, poor things, they suppose. History is hard dates and unrememberable dull facts, unpronounceable names. I once made an experiment with a class of 33 boys, Standard 6th, age 15—16. I asked them their own birth-dates, the birthdate of their father, of Canute, Alfred and Akbar. The latter part of the question was answered correctly by almost all, very few knew their birth dates, not one of them knew when his father first saw the light of the day. I found their History teaching was hopeless. The main defect was that they knew all about the past, very little of the present. They seemed to live in the age of



Chandragupta, Asoka, the Druids, and the Crusades. They knew next to nothing of Contemporary History. They were blissfully ignorant of the important transition through which their country was passing, and even the names of its valiant sons. They had not heard of Ramkrishna. Tagore and Bose. They were obsessed with foreign names, foreign wars, and foreign events. They knew all about the Reformation and Martin Luther, nothing of Dayanand, Saraswati or Keshab Chunder Sen; they knew the names of Henry VIII's 6 wives by heart, not much of Nur Jehan or Ahilya Bai; they waxed eloquent over the daring, valor and heroism of Clive and Hastings, but thought that Shivaji was a "mountain rat" and Aurangzeb a wicked tyrant.

Why blame the teacher and the Head Teacher? Both are helpless victims of the system. They may not teach what they like. Their scope is nil. They have no choice of their own. They must obey: they must teach as they are asked to teach. The Inspectors have a keen eye on the books in use in the school. It pleases them to hear the praises of their country's heroes recited in the History classes. and, thanks to the obedient class teacher, they are seldom disappointed. They hear them ad nauseum.

I think it is time that our History Teaching underwent a Radical Change. We want better History books, books which will be free from narrow patriotism but equally free from foreign praise that denationalizes. We want well-written, well-bound, illustrated books written in a fair-minded spirit. If our Reformed Councils with Education as transferred subject and an Indian presiding over it as its Minister, are something more than the farce they are supposed to be, might not the Departments offer rewards to competent Indians or Europeans who will write suitable books on Indian History? I agree with Mr. H. G. Wells in that there are no Histories but History. There is no History of England, Germany, India—just as there is no English Chemistry, French Chemistry etc. There is History of Man. But I differ from him when he says that History ought to be taught from ancient times, from the cave man. I believe it is infinitely more rational to teach History from now backwards. I should like an Indian child to know his birth date, and all about himself, then his father's and mother's birth-date and the History of his family. Then I should start with the Kenya question, Nabha Abdication, Nagpur Flag, Gandhi's trial, Prince of Wales's Visit, Tilak's death, the Punjab affair and Rowlatt Bills. These current topics will provide ample scope for lessons in History and Geography. I should gradually work up

to Clive, Hastings, the Moguls, the Sikhs, the Marathas and others. I should make History-teaching a real live thing by having a Pageant of Indian History. I should like a revival of Dramatic Representation of History. Our ancestors had these in the Ras Lilas. We do not realize the value of Pageants as the Western Nations do. The Pageants will make the dead past live again before the pupils. Cramming a few paragraphs by heart, reciting the names of gulfs, bays, lakes, rivers, the heights of mountains, the exports and imports, this is called Geography. It is never co-related to History or Literature. It is completely divorced from life though Geography is nothing if not the study of Man in relation to his surroundings, in other words study of Man's life on earth. The besetting sin of Geography teaching in India is its almost criminal emphasis on foreign stuff. The Indian student knows more of the coal and iron mines of Britain than is good for his head. I once visited Standards 5, 6 & 7 of a High School and found that they all were learning about the coal and iron mines of Britain. Our school children know very little of the Geography of India. What little they know is so badly taught that we have the sorry spectacle of a boy living at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna blissfully ignorant that the mighty rivers of his text book could be the little streams

passing by his door.\* Indeed the saying is true that the Ganges flows by our door but we go in search of it elsewhere !

On another occasion Undergraduates of the Bombay University appearing for the Commerce Degree Examination could not describe the Bombay harbour.

Like History. Geography ought to be taught first with the home, the school, the village, and the Taluka or a District. School journeys to places of interest could be organized and be made a source of immense profit. Similarly regional survey. The why and wherefore of things ought to receive emphasis. Local industries ought to be studied, why they arose there and not elsewhere. Very important lessons could be given with comparatively insignificant articles like the Charkha, a model of the Taj Mahal, Kashmir enrios. etc.—and the relation of Man, Place, and Work taught.

Getting up and enacting scenes from the Moguls, the Sikhs, and the Mahrathas will afford scope for learning Drama, and Handicrafts. Acting will develop the æsthetic sense. Above all the method will create interest and give joy to the pupils. If nothing else, this should justify its trial and adoption in our schools.

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\* An observation of our Poet Rabindra.

There is no subject so badly taught in Indian schools as Geography and yet that is the subject the study of which could be made fascinating and of immense profit to the learner. It is through Geography rightly handled that the nations could be taught the sorely-needed lesson that Humanity is One, that beneath all the variegated forms, there is the undercurrent of the same life. They could be made to realize that Unity in Diversity which Shelley described so beautifully in these lines :—

“ Life like a dome of many-coloured glass  
Stains the white Radiance of Eternity.”

All that Geography teaching could do.

In point of fact our Geography teaching is as dull, dreary, profitless as the other subjects—perhaps worse.

I should bring the daily newspaper, the “Bombay Chronicle” or the “Times of India,” no matter which, and tell the class the facts about the Kenya question. They will have a map of the World, another one of Africa in front of them. They could put up a pin on the Kenya Colony. The lesson could take some such turn as this. The British Colonies, their History and importance, commercial and political, the various races, the Africans, the Maoris, the Boers, the White Settlers,

the Indian Immigrants and their respective rights. I am sure the class could be led to discuss the question from the stand-point of justice and fair play and pronounce their own verdict. For the matter of that they might form themselves into the Cabinet, receive African, Indian and white Settlers' Deputations, listen to their side of the question and pronounce their decision. This will be dramatization of History and will provide scope for learning Parliamentary procedure, the laws of courteous and restrained debate, weighing and measuring of questions and reasoning them out impartially. It will train our future administrators.

Furthermore, it will create that interest in our fellow-Indians abroad of whom we know so little and for whom we care less. I knew nothing of Kenya till lately. It will broaden the sympathies and widen the outlook of pupils.

They could be led to realize the economic condition of India which forces Indians to emigrate to America, South-Africa and Kenya. A recital of the work of the outstanding figures, Gandhi, Andrews, and Shastri will bring before them in a realistic manner the exact condition of affairs in the Colonies.

The other current topics could be dealt with similarly.

As with History and Geography so with Arithmetic; complete divorce from the realities of life is the chief draw-

back. Little children are given examples involving multiplication of thousands and tens of thousands and asked to deal with millions and billions, when they have not dealt in hundreds. The teaching is dull, mechanical, soulless. A few rules, *e.g.* rule of three, are crammed up and followed unintelligently. I have a pupil who demonstrates the utter futility of Arithmetic teaching by rote. Give him the following example:—

I learn 6 pages daily. How many pages will I learn in three days ?

He either multiplies or divides. The answer is either right or wrong. If it is right it is right. When wrong he changes his tactics and multiplies instead of dividing. There is no intelligence exercised. The result is disgust in the minds of the learners. As a schoolboy I hated the subject with a hearty hate. Not my fault either. The teachers taught the subject so.....well stupidly. I could never make any head or tale of what they said. If  $(a + b)(a - b) = a^2 - b^2$  what on earth had I to do with that. It might have been  $a^{100} - b^{100}$  and made no difference to me. Mathematics was my abomination. To deal with foreign exchange, foreign weights and measures when I knew little of Rupees, annas, and pies, was boring. The net result with all that study was that when in the bazaar, demands were made on my knowledge of

Arithmetic, I was hopeless. My only consolation was that the other boys, the clever ones, were no better. They buy some fruits or vegetables and start calculating the price for minutes together. Failing to do so orally they would take out pencil and paper and work. Helpless, they would stare blankly in the Bunya's face who, a ready calculator, would have a triumphant smile over them.

Mathematics ought to be made real. Children ought to keep a shop and buy and sell. They ought to deal in Rupees, annas, and pies, not in £, S. and P. Another method of teaching Mathematics is known as the Projects System of Education. Like several other systems it has originated in America. The children are given projects to build Houses and School-Rooms. They inquire out the rates of building materials and actually undertake the construction works. They learn their Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry in a realistic and interesting manner.

Other countries are educationally progressive. They know the value of education and realize that any amount spent on it will repay hundredfold to the country. They value individual life and the immense possibilities before each juvenile citizen. We ape and imitate only the trivialities of the West. Is it not time to awake from our slumber of ages and learn from the West what it can teach us in educational methods?



## CHAPTER V.

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### THE 'PARIAH' OF THE SERVICES.

The elementary teacher in India is a 'Pariah' of the Services. He is an 'untouchable' whom the Secondary Teachers, the University Tutors, and the Society in general must look down upon. He forms a class by himself. He is usually ignorant. His qualifications for the post are first his poverty, second his utter stupidity, and thirdly, inability to do anything else in life. He takes to teaching because he thinks it is the one profession which does not demand intelligence or tact, and one, moreover, in which he can afford to be as lazy as he may and as irresponsible as he can. He has received no education. He has studied the three R's no doubt. He can read and write his vernacular and knows 2 and 4 make 6. Probably he has stayed at a Training College and learnt, in addition to what he already knows, that "to spare the rod is to spoil the child." The ancient Principal who abhors Montessorism and Froebelism and their new-fangled doctrines of freedom for the child, does all he can to counteract their baneful teachings.

He has been brought up on a regime of repression and sees no reason why the younger generation should have

an easy time of it at school. He has a few favourite maxims which he is never tired of repeating to his pupils—the teachers under training. “Never trust the child” is one. “The child is a young Satan” is another. “The child, the wife, the horse, the servant, beat all the four of them morning and evening, early and late, with or without reason” is the third. This last is his quotation from Shaikh Saadi, the Persian poet. He knows no psychology; he does not care to know it either. It won’t pay him.

Equipped with this training the primary master starts his work of educating his country’s children. He gives them what he knows. He cannot possibly give them anything more. He ‘crams’ a few facts down their throats. He subjects them to iron drill-sergeant discipline, the same he has known, and makes of the school, a barrack and a jail. He cares little for the expansive instincts of childhood. He does not know what they are. Spontaneity he calls perversity, healthy animal spirits he mistakes for mischief, wilful lawlessness and ignorance he mistakes for sinfulness.

His one task is to repress and repress all joyful activity. Repression leads to suppression. Suppression of healthy instincts is intellectual and spiritual death. The result of it is sorrow. This is what the master wanted. Had

not his Training College Principal taught him to hate Montessori and Froebel, and all that jargon of "Self-Government," the youngsters were talking about! For this noble work of education the country pays him the handsome sum of Rs. 20 per month—(he used to get Rs. 10 till very recently)—equal to or a little over what a maid or waitress or servant gets per week in London, or a mason, carpenter, clerk, or coolie makes in his own country. Early married, much 'familied,' he tries his best to supplement his meagre income by various means. In addition to his school-work, he gives private tuitions, he takes charge of the village post office, steals unregistered parcels, levies his tithes on births, marriages and ceremonies from his flock, the ignorant villagers, in cash and kind, and not infrequently thieves as much as he can from the Government Contingency grants sanctioned for school purposes. If the school is not in his native place, he lives in a school-room and begs his cot from a parent. He has no servant for he cannot afford to have any; moreover he does not need one, for hasn't he a band of children whom he may command as he likes? One of them polishes his boots—if he has a pair—another fetches water for him from the well while a third one cooks for him.

Thus he drags on his miserable career. All sympathy for the poor soul! He is not the sole participant in

chicanery and bribes. There are his "bosses" to be pleased, the Deputy Inspector, the Assistant Deputy Inspector, the Sub-protem Assistant Deputy Inspector, their clerks, their cooks—all to levy their tithes from him as he has levied his own from the villagers. This System is known as "Rasai" and has all the sanctity of a custom. Several days prior to the Inspecting Officer's visit, the village master is up and doing. He secures a house from one parent, borrows coats from another, begs milk from a third, begs or buys other provisions from his savings, and keeps everything trim and ready for his Masters. If all goes well the 'Sahibs' are pleased and he is favourably reported about. Else, he knows what will happen. He is transferred far from his home—his annual increments of Rs. 1 or 2 are stopped and there is no end of harassments of other kinds. Pliant souls who believe in Kismet and the virtue of contentment settle down to this position of slavery from which they never rise. Others, the more ambitious ones, turn peons or cooks provided they can get these highly covetable, certainly more lucrative, jobs. The social status of the Primary Teacher may well be imagined. He is lower than a menial.

He is not even an "upper servant," as ushers or tutors in England were called in former times. In this respect we are where England was nearly a century ago

when Macaulay made his famous speech in the House of Commons and described the Elementary teachers as "discarded jobbers, place-hunters, fools, knaves, thieves" to whom he "would not entrust the keys of his cellars." The nation entrusted its children to these. Fortunately things have improved in England since Macaulay's time. The teaching profession has come by its own. It has gained for itself the social esteem it deserves. The elementary teacher is adequately paid and socially respected. According to the Burnham Scale which came into force from April 1920, the minimum for men is £ 200 a year, and £ 187/10 for women with annual increments of £ 12/10 in each case to a maximum of £ 425 for men and £ 340 for women. This works out at a minimum of Rs. 234 per month for men and Rs. 200 for women *i.e.* as much as a Professor gets in a decent Indian College. The pay and prospects, as also the social position and status, the opportunity for service, in the elementary school, attract really capable men and women. The British elementary teachers of to-day count among them the best products of the Universities and the Training Colleges.

Unlike conditions in India, there are no water-tight compartments of the Elementary, the Secondary, and the University teachers. Often a trained teacher prefers

an elementary to a secondary school and some of the best tutors, professors, and even Vice-Chancellors have risen from the ranks of the elementary teachers. Sir Michael E. Sadler, well known in India for his work on the Calcutta University Commission, rose to the Vice-Chancellorship of Leeds University from the lowest rung of the educational ladder, and so did Professor John Adams, the distinguished Principal of the London Day Training College whose pupil the present writer had the privilege to be.

For an Elementary Teacher in India to rise to a Vice-Chancellorship is beyond the limits of possibility or the wildest dreams of an enthusiast. I should like to see the water-tight compartments in India broken. The Primary teacher ought to be promoted to the Secondary School and the University. I see no reason why the best University Professors should not be specially trained in the most up-to-date methods of Infant Schools, the Montessori, and the Kindergarten, and given charge of our Primary Schools. In neglecting the Primary teacher we cut at the root of Education.

Of what avail is Free and Compulsory elementary education when the agents of it remain what they are, and the quality of education continues the same. It is a mere cant of the new Ministers, a vain boast if not an

electioneering trick, that they improve education by making it Free and Compulsory. The reform needed is in the entire spirit of Education. The School-Coach needs not only to be better horsed but brought entirely on a new track. But it does certainly need to be better horsed. Do that by all means but feed the horses you have now—the Pariahs of the Services—better than you do, so that they might live and work.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE FARCE OF INSPECTIONS.

The senior master of Southcote School is active as ever. He bustles from one end of the school to the other. He visits every class-room and informs the master of the Inspector's coming. He exhorts the boys to wear their best dresses and cautioning the master to keep everything trim, he hurries on to another class-room. In a few minutes the whole school atmosphere is changed. All is solemnity and earnestness. Even the proud Mr. Piper-son seems to have caught the contagion. "What an important thing it must be to be an Inspector in this country?" he thinks. He takes several rounds round the school, visits the class-rooms and puts everybody on his mettle. The school is a hive of activity. The masters dust the board, the desks, the walls; they put up the time-table that has lain on the floor for months, they correct note-books, cover them and label them; the boys cleanse the floor of ink spots they have made. The clerk, who has now completely recovered from the effects of that accident—I mean the Senior-Master Government circular—torn Dhoti—spilt ink—gumpot accident, is all importance. He keeps the office but he thinks



he is the "boss" that runs the show. He calls, he orders, he commands. The office files—with the dust of a year several inches thick—are cleansed and kept in order. The compound, a litter of waste paper, bannana skins, and rubbish, uncleansed for weeks, is made a model of cleanliness. The Mali too is suddenly roused from his slumber. He trims, he prunes, he plants.

What a wonder-working Sahib the Inspector is! Not merely in the school do we see this curse of externalism, this farce of an annual clean-up of what has accumulated during the months, this exhibition to a superior of not what the state of affairs is ordinarily but what it is only *on that particular day, in his presence, and will not be the very next day*. This hypocrisy, sham, and fraud is a characteristic feature of our institutions at the present time. What you see in a school at Inspection time is repeated on a larger scale in our towns and villages. A Governor, Commissioner, or Collector's tour or visit puts the hitherto slumbering Municipality on the alert. The roads are cleaned and watered, the streets are swept, the rubbish heaps are removed. The lamps are put up and trimmed. The Municipal building is whitewashed and coloured. The Union Jack is hoisted. The staff is all steadiness, punctuality and attention. And yet not throughout the city, for, since the 'Lat Sahib' will pass

only a previously arranged route, why should the rest of the town be clean? The road from the Station to the Residence is a model of tidiness and decoration. You should have seen the same a few days before? Has it ever occurred to an unconventional officer, to play Haroun Al Rashid, and visit the paths of his triumphal march the next day, or the next after that, in cognito? Public money is spent for a few hours' *tamasha* but the Municipality grudges a few rupees for the city's health, be it daily removal of garbage, or proper water-supply or light. "Swaraj will remedy everything" says the N. C. O. "The school will remedy everything" say I. "First a Self-governing country, then a Self-governing school" says Mr. K. Natrajan of the Indian Social Reformer. "Outwardly so but in spirit first a self-governing school, free childhood, then a self-governing country, and free councillors" say I.

A single boy trained in a free school could be a force for his community's good. In the Panchayat, the Municipality, the Legislative Council, or the Legislative Assembly, he could act as a lever that would raise his village, town or city to perfect civic life, perfect health and sanitation, right education, orderliness, industrious activity, and prosperity.

To come back to our narrative. It is the Inspection Day. The Southcote School, its masters and boys are to be weighed and measured in scales and judged. The school is on tiptoe, breathless with expectation. You could hear a pin drop. The compound, the class-rooms, the masters and the boys are a picture of cleanness. The Senior Master has not been idle. He has coaxed, he has cajoled, he has coerced everybody into activity. "It will be only for a day" is the consolation he has offered his subordinates. He has promised sweets to the school monitors and prefects provided everything passes off well. Early in the morning he has taken care to station Pattawalas at various stages along the line of Inspector's route. They must hide behind buildings and trees, see the Inspector without being seen by him, telegraph his approach from one to the other and be on their duties before he actually arrives. This the faithful ones carry out faithfully. Mr. Pestonji takes only as much of breath as will suffice to keep him alive during the coming trial. The Inspector arrives and goes to the Head Master with whom he confers for a few minutes. The masters have known of the arrival and are as loud as ever to lend an impression of being busily occupied and enthusiastic about their work. Mr. Bhattacharya is the first to receive official favour. He is an old stager who knows the tricks of the game alright. He has collected

all the note-books of his class, 33 boys each having 6 note-books. These nearly two hundred books he has gone through carefully. He has erased the blots, corrected the mistakes, covered the books with new brown paper, labelled them neatly with the school labels and handed them over to the boys to write their names on, as clearly as their training in slovenliness would permit them to do. It must be said to the credit of Mr. Bhattacharya that he has spent a good deal of his meagre income to get the covers, the labels, and the blotting papers and that he has spent many a precious evening hour after the school-lessons in covering up the pupils' untidiness and in preparing to show to the Inspector precisely what his boys have not been doing throughout the year. Mr. Bhattacharya knows the Inspectorial mentality more intimately than is given to most teachers. He knows in what order the Sahib examines the note-books. Last year he placed all the best books on the top but the Inspector picked up a few from the top, a few from the middle, and several from the bottom. Mr. Bhattacharya has profited by the experience. He has arranged his books accordingly, and his boys too. The best of these are chosen and scattered about the class in all corners, in the obscure ones particularly. These have special instructions that they will be asked questions and it will be upto them to uphold the honour of the class. The nature of the

questions, the proper answers to them, all these are hammered into their brains. For several days past the class has done one special lesson in English; the lesson Mr. Bhattacharya proposes to teach in the Inspector's presence, the lesson on which his report, his promotion, his advancement depends. He leaves no stone unturned to see that every boy, even the dumbest, should cut a respectable figure. He has repeated the lesson with the class, he has rehearsed the part, the questions he will ask and the answers they should give, once, twice, any number of times, during the school-hours, and after the school hours. He has stage-managed everything and is ready to enact the drama when the Inspector and the Head arrive.

The master makes a low bow raising the palm of his hand from the ground to the forehead. The 'Sahib' wears the most forbidding looks possible. He does not return the Salaam. "The masters will be all the better for that. Then they respect and fear you more" he thinks. The master is all nervousness. He seems to be distilled into jelly with the act of fear. He wipes off his perspiration and coughs. How long will the Inspection last? Will the 'Sahib' continue to inspect after the 'got up' lesson was over? Will he examine the class or the master? What report will be given? These are the questions to

which Mr. Bhattacharya would give anything to have in answer. Poor soul! his life seemed to hang on these few questions. The Inspector asked of the Head the master's name. Mr. Piperson was taken aback. He thought the Inspector will inspect the master, not himself. But he plucked up courage, and muttered forth "Eh.....Mr. Afzul...." "Bhattacharya, Sir" was the saving interposition of the master. "Yes, yes, I quite remember, Bhattacharya," added the Head, thankful for the rescue. A minor incident in itself, but it revived the master's confidence. He carried on his work smoothly, during the twenty minutes that the Inspection lasted, and had reason to congratulate himself on the success of his class.

His neighbour, Mr. Shankerdas, was not so fortunate. He was a new recruit and this was his first Inspection. He hated all sham and hypocrisy. He saw no reason why boys should be dirty throughout the year and gorgeous on one particular day. He refused to cover their books, erase their blots, for he said to himself "If the Inspector wants to examine the pupils' one year's work let him see their blots, their studies, their daily clothes, let him listen to their mistakes as well as to their excellences. As for me I refuse to pay the Inspector the homage to consider this a special occasion. I will carry on everything as usual." And he did so. When the Inspector entered, he greeted him boldly with a smile and took no

more notice of him. He merely continued his lesson. He scattered his questions all over the class, directed them against the dunces no less than the scholars. It was an English lesson and he told the class that all words like "to go," "to eat," "to walk" were verbs. The Inspector asked a boy "What is *to-day*?" "A verb, Sir," came the prompt answer. The Inspector looked triumphant but he was not quite so happy with his next question, for, when he asked the past tense of the same word Vishnu cried out to the top of his voice "Yesterday, Sir." At this stage a boy fainted in the class. The Inspection stopped. The Inspector's report ran thus:—

"Fair. The master was extremely nervous. He is a new recruit and inexperienced. The class thought that "*to-day*" was a verb. The boys' clothes and note-books were untidy. A boy fainted in the class. The master should be careful about the hygiene of his class. The Government have provided weighing machines, and health charts for periodical Medical Inspection. These should be taken advantage of."

Frankly speaking, these Inspections are a huge farce. They serve no useful purpose. They do no good either to the teacher, or the pupil, or the cause of education.

The Inspecting Officer comes as a "fault-finder," an enemy who is dreaded and despised, rather than as a

## CHAPTER VII.

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### EARLY MARRIAGE.

A former colleague of mine narrated to me the following story.

A teacher was coaching up his pupils—Standard 6th, age 15—when a very little child entered the class-room and stood wondering. Upon the master's inquiring as to what he wanted, the baby explained that his mother wanted his father "Ganpat", who was a pupil in the class. The teacher was not slow to embrace this opportunity. He ordered "Ganpat" to stand up and addressed "Master Ganpat" in the following terms:—

"Your father is slothful; he does not do his lessons properly. *Lesson Nathi Karto.* (Gujarati). "*Ane Dhapa Mar, Dhapa*" which, rendered into English, means "give him some blows". The kid hesitated a little at this novel proposition but was not unwilling to obey; for, was it not a rare opportunity to avenge his own wrongs? So he thought, and soundly thrashed his dear Pa.

The story points a two-fold moral. First, the question of punishment. The lazy pupil must not only be



punished but disgraced. Indeed the master set a glorious example in reverence to the youngster and the class. Secondly, the question of early marriage. A school-boy had a son who himself, probably, was a school-boy.

A similar case was brought to the notice of Mr. Piperson in his school. His pet system of the "Houses" had come and stayed in the school. Some months later, the annual examination had taken place and Mr. Piperson went round the classes to make promotions. When he came to the 4th Standard, the case of a pupil—aged 15—was doubtful. Mr. Piperson was for detaining the boy when the master-in-charge narrated the following. "Sir", he said, "this is the 4th attempt of the boy in this standard. When he failed the first time his first wife died, the second failure broke the heart of the second, with the third, the third wife departed this life. Heaven knows what might happen to the new wife if her unfortunate husband is detained this time." Mr. Piperson, whatever this other faults, was human. His heart melted at the pathos of this story. The argument was irrefutable. The boy was promoted. The life of the fourth wife was saved.

Another time two boys of the 1st Standard—age 11 and 12,—applied for a month's leave of absence from

the school. The reason advanced was attendance at marriage ceremonies. In accordance with the school rules the application, duly endorsed by the class master, came to the Head. Mr. Piperson was interested. He wanted to know whose marriage the children were going to attend. He had himself attended one or two Hindoo marriages and brought home some cocoanuts and boquets, when he was fresh, before the Local Officers' Club had spoiled him. But that's a different story. The master came. He explained that the worthy bridegrooms who were going to celebrate their wedding were the pupils themselves—the two brothers—age 11 and 12 years. Mr. Piperson was 40. No ring was visible on his finger yet.

Pupils who are husbands and fathers before they are boys, are these the materials wherewith to build the foundation of a healthy nation ?

I went to a Gujarati play the other day. The title was.....well I forget.....An old miser has a beautiful young daughter. He wants to get her married and profit by the transaction. He finds an old man of sixty, decrepit with age, but wealthy, and sells to him his daughter in marriage for the sum of Rs. 4,000. As might be imagined the girl does not become

very happy at the prospect of her father becoming suddenly rich and she marrying one who might easily have been her grandfather. Her girl-friends sympathise with her in her woe, so does her mother. The latter remonstrates with her husband in the usual mild, gentle, and suppliant tones, so characteristic of Indian women, in return for which she is rewarded with a plentiful shower of kicks and blows. A wily Brahmin acts as a middleman between the two old men. He knocks out hard cash from the prospective bridegroom who should be better off in a Sick-Hospital than in a bridal chamber. Throughout the play he acts as his evil genius and goads him on to his end. The wedding day comes. The joy of the fond, amorous, old man knows no bounds. Decked in gold and silver, flowers and garlands, he arrives with his party. The bride's party sits squatting on the floor, with the Brahmins whose bidding they reverently obey. Rice, cocoanuts, flowers, and other articles of ceremony are kept on the floor. The bridegroom sits close by. A short while after the bride comes led by her mother and bride's maids. She wears a veil. The ceremony commences. An end of the bride's *sari* is tied to the coat-end of the bridegroom. The Brahmins next chant sacred verses from the Scriptures. The ceremony proceeds.

All of a sudden a rescue party arrives. A young man, interested in social reform, brings police assistance to stop the iniquitous proceedings. The play takes a dramatic turn. The veiled bride discloses herself and turns out a bearded young man. The plot of the old man has been frustrated by a youthful lover. The bridegroom and his cunning Brahmin adviser are arrested, and the bride's father shamed.

Shortly after, the bonafide bride is married to her rescuer—the youthful social reformer, not the policeman.

But her miseries are by no means at an end. Her husband is a younger brother. He is an under-graduate dependent for his support upon his elder brother who is an office clerk. It is a joint family, the presiding genius of which is the elder brother's wife. The new bride has to obey the commands of this important personage—and virtually be her slave. In her husband's absence to the University, as a household drudge, mistrusted and maltreated, she finds life burdensome. Lack of interest in life causes bitterness of soul. A quarrel between the two women ensues. The older one steals ornaments from some one and places them with the younger who is consequently arrested. The husband arrives at an opportune moment, and succeeds in proving the innocence of his wife. The evildoer is punished.

The Dakshnis have a similar play called "Sharada". I attended it at Bal Gandharva's—whose delightful music was my chief attraction. "Sharada" was only a Marathi edition of the Gujarati play described. An old father, greedy of money, anxious to dispose of his daughter, secures a half-dying man, greedy of a young wife, anxious to purchase her at any price, a wicked Brahmin to bring the two together, the girl's sorrow, mother's vain interference, the ceremony, the dramatic turn, *viz.*, a young man veiled as a bride, the rescue party—all except the last portion of the above play—repeated in a Marathi setting. I am told these plays were written few years ago with the special object of holding up to ridicule the evil custom indicated, a very commendable object. Things have improved since then, but if we are to build our nation on a firm foundation of Spiritual Health, should not dramas of this kind and stories of early marriage like those related be things of the past? Are these not national problems as much as Reformed Councils, more, not less, for do they not affect the real life of the people, their homes, their personal well-being?

Some years ago the examiners in English at the Joint Board Examination of the University of Bombay set for an essay the following subject:—

## “EVIL CUSTOMS IN MY COMMUNITY.”

The answers were edifying. They revealed a state of things throughout the Presidency, in Maharashtra, in Gujarat, Kathiawad, and Sindh, which no thoughtful society would permit in its midst. It was a sad, endless tale of young girls sold to old men for money, of the terrible hardships of the girls' parents on account of the dowry system, *Deh Leti* as the papers from Sind called it, and the wicked tortures of the body and mind to which the little brides were subjected by the mothers-in-law, whose demands of money knew no end. The catalogue of evil customs did not close with these. There was the tyranny of the caste, and the priest. You may be a pauper, you may not have enough to feed yourself and your children, but on the occasion of a relative's death-anniversary you must give the caste-dinner. You must entertain to a luxurious banquet several hundreds of stout, able-bodied members of your caste who had plenty of food at home, enough to eat and spare. In order to perform this very commendable object you must sell your wife's ornaments, if you haven't any of these left you must beg, borrow, or steal money, or, as is very often the case, you must sell or mortgage your ancestral house. And this because you are a fool and an ass and tamely subscribe to a foolish convention which should be “more

honoured in the breach than the observance", because you are a veritable coward who dare not resist fearlessly the wicked tyranny of custom, of a body of greedy, wicked caste-men, because you dare not think, feel, and do as your conscience tells you. You meekly submit to one of the worst of social tyrannies because you are afraid of the punishment, of being "outcasted". In giving the caste-dinner the action that you do literally amounts to this. You deprive your wife and children of minimum comforts, of their food, raiment, shelter, education, and peace. You sell your ancestral house which you have no business to do since it ought to descend to your wife and children, you bring yourself and your family on the brink of starvation, destitution and ruin, all because your school-master never taught you to say "No" when you felt that you ought to say "No".

What appears at the surface a purely social problem is in reality a question of pedagogics. Inordinate fear of authority, passive obedience to the rule of another dread of speaking up and acting up to one's convictions, these are bred in our Primary Schools. It is the primary school-master and the vicious system of which he is a helpless slave, that are responsible for the ruin of the country. The mental attitude of slavish obedience to others, which is popularly known as "Slave Mentality" is first

bred in the school. The child then carries it with him throughout his life. It is the old man of the sea who has got over his neck once and will never leave him till his death. Afraid of speaking out what he thinks and feels to the school-master, he will do the same to the parents, to the 'boss', to the priests. and to the caste. A tame submission at any price rather than a bold, fearless but dignified resistance will be his permanent lot. Thus will Tyranny find itself perpetually enthroned in safety and the country led to spiritual stagnation, decay, and death. How, how shall we ever advance socially, educationally, spiritually, in life, when there is no protest, no revolt,—against Tyrant Custom. We want Lutherism, Leninism, Gandhism in all branches of our life. Then the attainment of real Swaraj becomes a matter of course.

If non-co-operation has any meaning in it and that meaning be refusal to co-operate with, and thus help evil, why have political Non-co-operation alone? Why not social Non-co-operation, educational, caste, and religious non-co-operation? Life is a whole even though it touches the individual at many seemingly different points. Swaraj in the country is not a panacea for all the ills of our life. How Swaraj is going to reduce the pernicious dowry which embitters the life of millions, stop early-marriage which saps the life of the nation, improve the lot of



thousands and thousands of child-widows whose sufferings are a blot on our nation's fair name, help the victims of caste-tyranny out of their mortgage deeds, debts, litigation, starvation and ruin, I fail to see. The fact is we want Swaraj of the individual in the first instance and Swaraj of the country thereafter. The foundation of national liberty must be individual liberty. You cannot enslave individuals, their minds and souls, be they children ever so small and ever so obedient, and proclaim liberty for the country by a fiat of Councils and Assemblies, reformed, or re-reformed.

Individuals make up a community, a nation, a society. Free individuals make a free state. A single slave can be a menace to the whole society. A single free man can liberate his community. Think of Dayanand Saraswati raising his clarion-voice against superstition, against the tyranny of priest-craft. Think of Agarkar of Poona defying his whole community, patiently suffering social ostracism consequent upon widow-marriage, an outcast in a cottage, the privileges of human fellowship, water, and fire, food, and above all, social intercourse denied to him ; think of these and many another who has martyred himself only to hold the torch of Truth burning brightly, and realize what power lies in the human soul, in the still small voice of humanity, in the light of Reason, to

illumine what is dark and to guide erring fellow-mortals to the Right by daring to differ from them and walking in the light of one's own conscience. These were mighty souls, leaders of men, happy warriors :—

“ Whose high endeavours are an inward light  
That makes the path before him always bright, ”  
who found

“ Comfort in himself and in his cause:  
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws  
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause. ”

Whatever the beauties of the existing educational system in India may be, this much is certain that it does not, will not, and cannot in the nature of things, produce leaders, men of the stamp indicated above. These are men who became what they became inspite of the educational system, not because of it. And if things are allowed to continue as they are at present, it will be many years before we get men with qualities which make for reform and spiritual progress of the country.

Conditions elsewhere are better but not perfect. Compare the following from a British Educational Magazine :—

“ The happenings of the world of to-day ‘ give one furiously to think ’ and one's mind conceives

a bold, almost a heretical thought which insistently demands an answer. Is it possible that too much University study tends to kill the fruits of the spirit ?

“ Looking round at the men who count it is remarkable to notice how few of them are possessed of University degrees. To mention some at random : Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, Lloyd George, Lord Northcliffe, Lord Reading, Viscount French, Viscount Jellicoe, Homer Lane. It is perhaps that the Universities are in need of reformed education. Our educational system is a manufactory of mediocres, of anti-idealistic, egoistic, tamely submissive, passively obedient, wage-earners, or rather ‘ unable to do anything—paperdegree holding ’ job-seekers. physical wrecks, intellectual slaves, and spiritual imbeciles. We are a long way off yet from the ideal, but all the greater reason why we should remember constantly the ideal of education outlined by Robert Browning.—

“ Man is not Man as yet.

Nor shall I deem his object served, his end

Attained, his genuine strength put forth,

While only here and there a star dispels

The darkness, here and there a towering mind  
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host  
Is out at once to the despair of night,  
When all Mankind is perfected,  
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,  
I say, begins Man's general infancy."

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## CHAPTER VIII.



### A CHILD-WIDOW.

Mr. Bhatacharya's inspection report was favourable. He was promoted from Rs. 70 to Rs. 80. He was grateful. He had started on Rs. 30 a month and served for twenty years. His family consisted of wife and seven children, six daughters and one son. A younger brother who was a student in the junior B.A. class, also lived with him. Mr. Bhatacharya's eighty rupees were to feed, clothe, house, and educate seven juveniles besides three adults. Ten of these lived for a number of years in a single-room tenement for which they paid Rs. 15 per month as rent, till Ratanlal's, the younger brother's, marriage added the eleventh member to the family. They then shifted to two rooms in a poorer chawl and paid Rs. 20. Mr. Bhatacharya struggled against poverty bravely. He worked hard at school and gave private tuitions in the evenings which added rupees thirty to his salary. He took no exercise. He hadn't time for any. He read no books beyond the school texts. He had neither any money nor any time nor energy for them. For the same reason he attended no theatres, cinemas, or musical entertainments. He rose

at dawn, learnt the school lessons, corrected exercises, and went to the school. In the evening he returned home, took a cup of tea, and hastened to his tuitions. He returned back after eight, took his dinner of rice, dal, and a green vegetable, gathered his family in a circle, said his prayers with them and retired. Thus did he live from day to day, his work his only cheer, his children his only joy, and his prayers his only comfort.

Mr. Bhat was not particularly strong. To be more precise he kept but indifferent health. He had just recovered from an attack of Pneumonia and his chest was weak. He coughed at times in the course of his lessons. The doctor had advised complete rest and a holiday but Mr. Bhat could ill-afford either. He had taken sick-leave for a month and got only half his pay. He had a month's privilege leave also half on pay due to him, but this he had reserved for a special occasion *viz.* his eldest daughter's marriage which was fast approaching. Ratan's being in the Junior B.A. class was some relief to his elder brother. He had won the college scholarship of Rs. ten per month, got a private tuition of a similar amount, and could, occasionally, look after the children's lessons at home.

One thing weighed upon the mind of Bhat heavily. It made him pensive, moody, and gloomy. It was the

problem of his six daughters' marriage. Social convention and religious obligations required that they should be married before the age of 15 or 16 years, but the dowry system—Alas there was the rub! For each daughter he had to spend no less than five thousand rupees, four thousand as dowry to the girl and a thousand on marriage expenses. This amounted to rupees thirty thousand least, for all the six girls. If Mr. Bhat had got sons that would have been some consolation, but, as fate would have it, he had only one son and that was his last child. The arrival of the first daughter was welcomed by the newly married couple, they would have been happier if it had been a son but the vernacular proverb said that the first daughter was as good as a son. So they greeted her cheerfully. They little knew that baby Devki was the herald of five sisters. Bhat bore his lot like a man but his wife, in spite of her reading of the scriptures, was inconsolable. After the birth of her fourth daughter she invariably cried at not finding her baby a son. She did so particularly when the womenfolk, relatives, friends, and neighbours, came to offer her consolation. Then she would weep as if her heart would break. "Why should God inflict these six tortures on a poor woman like me when he sends all sons, seven of them, to cousin Lala's house, who has lakhs." The friends would then remind her of what the priest said only the other day

about the inexorable laws of Karma, of Kismet which tied the helpless mortal to suffer whatever he or she had to suffer. Some, more rational than others would appeal to her reason and ask how it helped her in any way to cry over that which could not be cured. Others of a more cheerful cast would hold forth visions of a rich future, of sons, wealth, and position, and thus soothe their sorrowful sister. Mr. Bhat took a saner view of the matter but even he could not solve the problem of the thirty thousand rupees. Whence was he to bring that amount? His income hardly sufficed for the household expenses. It is true that he had an ancestral house in his village but that brought him Rs. 5,000 only, just enough for the first marriage. The sentiment of not selling ancestral house was very strong in him and his wife; and he had tried his best not to part with the property, but in vain. Devki was betrothed and the demands of her mother-in-law for money were insistent. This worthy woman had threatened to break off the engagement unless the amount was paid up immediately. Mr. Bhat was helpless. He sold the house, paid up the dues but that brought him no nearer to the end of his troubles. There were the other five girls between the ages of 3 and 13, two of whom must be married in the next four or five years. Much as he thought over the question, he found no solution to it.



At home and in the classroom, in the midst of his lessons, he would pause and look vacantly. But he just tried to forget it and leave the matter to God.

What about Devki? The long-expected day has come at last. Bhat and his wife, Ratan and his wife, are all busy with festive arrangements, and so are relations and friends who have come from the mofussil for the occasion. The little bride to be has observed a holy fast and is secluded among her brides' maids. The men attend to outdoor work, the erection of a shamiana in the street adjacent to the house, to receive the bridegroom's party; the women to do their traditional work as custodians of ritual and ceremony, to look after the ladies' part of the festive arrangements, the bride's dresses, jewellery and what not.

Punctually at seven in the evening the bridegroom's procession arrived. In front, heralded by a military band, mounted on a beautiful white mare, was the handsome young bride-groom of about 19 years of age. He wore a shirt and dhoti of white silk and an imitation coronet. His name was Vasant. He was a college student, in the Intermediate class. He was followed by a long file of men and women decked in their best garments. The women's part of the procession was beautiful. It was a dream of fair women. Dressed in silk, satin, and

brocade of all shades and hues, with flowers in their hair, they moved like so many fairyqueens, a picture to haunt the imagination. At the approach of the party, the bridegroom and the ladies were received by the ladies while the men were met by Mr. Bhat and his friends. Soon after, the Brahmins began the ceremony. This lasted upto 11 P.M. when the visiting party prepared to depart. Little Devki had borne the day's ordeal like a brave girl but when the time of leaving her paternal home which she loved so dearly, came, her heart softened, tears gushed through her eyes and she clung fast to her mother. The loving parents reciprocated the feeling but the inevitable moment came and Devki joined her husband for her new home.

1 P.M. the same night. Bhat and his household were fast asleep, after the day's fatigue. Rest after labour and the thought that their daughter must be happy in her new surroundings, gave a peaceful slumber to Devki's parents. However it was hardly an hour since they had retired when they were startled by alarming cries. "Wake up and open the door. Well-a-day, Well-a-day. The bride-groom of an hour ago is no more. Vasant is gone to his eternal abode. We have lost our youth, but you come and take care of your child. She is insensible." Both Bhat and his wife trembled from head to

foot. They could hardly believe their ears. Were they waking or was it all a dream? The father summoned up courage to take the lantern and open the door, while the mother sought refuge in reciting the name of Hari. In a few minutes Bhat returned and threw himself on the floor. The suddenness of the blow deprived him of his habitual calmness. The tragic circumstance of his son-in-law meeting his end by fire from a kiteson light in his bridalchamber, on the very night of his wedding, a minute before he was to meet his bride, the rude shock to Devki's feelings, her fit of insensibility, but above all the problem of her future lot, cruel lifelong widow-hood, all these ideas whirled through his brain in rapid succession. His wife's grief was overpowering. Seeing her husband's plight she guessed all, uttered a loud wail, and fell to the ground senseless. Her cry woke up the whole household. The festive family gathering was transformed into a funeral procession. Bhat's friends succeeded in nerving him up and taking him to the other household. Bitter and loud was the wailing of the women when this party arrived. Devki was unconscious till the morning. When she opened her eyes she found her head in her father's lap. She looked as if she was dazed. She seemed to understand nothing. Why was she in a strange house, with strange faces, why was her father there, why were the women weeping, all seemed a dark mystery which she could not

solve. Some hours later, when the priests arrived and the bier was borne out of the house, her memory revived and she comprehended the mournful fact of her widow-hood and all that it implied. That evening Mr. Bhat brought back his widowed daughter home. Devki was a maiden in the morning, a bride in the evening, and a widow at mid-night! The father showered all the love which his paternal heart could command upon his unfortunate child, victim of cruel fate and of a social system still more cruel. He offered her the Indian's usual consolation, Religion. "Think yourself one of Shri Krishna's Gopis, a vestal virgin of the Deity, my child, pacify your heart, and sing Hari's praises who alone is the fulfillment of all desires" was the only comfort he could offer to his afflicted child. Little Devki, a holy virgin, was forced to a life of perpetual widow-hood. Let us reflect a little on her lot and that of tens of thousands of our young sisters of tender years whom the tyranny of social custom consigns to misery and oblivion and ask ourselves the question "must these things never change?" Let us pause and reflect on the condition of Devki's father and many more of our brothers like him, and ask ourselves the question, "Must tyrant custom rule unbridled forever and make cowards of us all?"

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### RANDOM REFLECTIONS.

Should text-books be allowed in the examination-hall? I think yes. My reason for holding this view is a very simple one. I think even otherwise the pupils do bring the texts with them. The only difference is that whereas ordinarily they carry them in their heads (smuggle them rather) now they will carry them in their hands, and openly too. If the examiners disallow the use of books on the ground that that will be no examination at all, that will be a confession that all that they do is to test the memory—a very important confession indeed and withal a true one. We want to stimulate thought and to test intelligence. The use of the text books will help rather than hinder this. The waste of time and energy in cramming facts will be saved and utilised for thought. As an editor of an educational magazine aptly remarks “Permission to the boy to bring his ‘Nesfield’ or ‘Rowe and Webb’ into the examination-room will not interfere with the examiner’s chance of assessing the boy’s essay-writing and paraphrasing ability. It will only interfere with the boy’s habit of learning his ‘Nesfield’ and ‘Rowe and Webb’ by heart.” The writer of the above is a

British educationist of a rare stamp who has worked with great success in India. Reading through his editorial notes is a source of pleasure. Here is another gem from his outspoken writings. "One of the very stupidest, dullest, and most truly ignorant men with whom the writer has ever come into personal contact, and more over the one whose English is the most inarticulate and incomprehensible of all the literate Indians he has ever met—is a *graduate* of an Indian University." I wonder what our Universities think of this, but I am not at all surprised. I think it is quite possible to cross the portals of our universities, and with distinction too, without being educated. I have known first class scholars "honours men" who lacked in common sense, in knowledge of the world, in address and deportment, and who, outside the classroom and the examination hall, were like fish without water. I know of graduate teachers who ~~passed~~ out of a training college with a first class diploma but who were dull and dishonest. To quote our friend the editor:—

"In a country which regards Education as stock-in-trade to be hawked in the matrimonial, social and commercial markets is a much greater danger than cheap  
" " ; and when, to make a few graduates annually,  
" school in a Presidency is organised on the

methodless crooked lines of the Matriculation Examiner, and tens of thousands of children are in consequence denied the proper training they pay for, a University may become much more of a curse than a blessing. Grey-haired relics of to-day will, in the distant future, say to their sturdy sons "Lucky young people you grow up in the days of Education. I, alas, went to school in the time when they prepared one for the Matriculation."

Why do masters beat the pupils? The phenomena could be explained in various ways. The master who gets angry with a pupil is really angry with himself. He projects his anger against another. He is out of centre with himself. Corporal punishment implies lack of harmony in the teacher himself. I have seldom seen a happy teacher beat his pupils.

There are other reasons too. The teacher might have been slighted by his Head or by the Inspector, he might have been superceded by a junior, he might have quarrelled with his wife and not paid his rent to the landlord, he might have had his liver congested or his spleen enlarged, he might have come to the school without his breakfast, or, in all probability he might have 5 or 6 daughters to provide dowries for. But this much is certain that the teacher who beats his pupils does not know child nature. Nor does he know what education means.

I once noticed a master kick and thrash a little child of 8 mercilessly, for no other fault than that of playing with a little toy-gun during recess-time. To add insult to the injury, he sent the child's toy to the Head who marvelled as to what it meant.

To such masters I should say "you are low, mean, cowards. You take advantage of the child's helplessness. Secure behind your privileged position, you slight, insult, bully, and beat those who have no power to return the same. Meet them on the road as man to man and fight if you wish to, but don't assault them in the class-room."

In civilised countries, the teacher who beats pupils is dismissed instantly. I see no reason why we should not do the same in India. The parents too are great sinners in this respect. I think the children need the support of the legislature. In Britain there are a number of children's acts which protect their interests. It is time that we had measures of a similar nature. I agree with Shaw that children should have the right to complain in special courts, against the injustice of adults, parents, teachers and others.

There are societies in India for the prevention of cruelty to animals; but caning continues in our schools. Should it continue any longer?



What about school buildings? Compare those of the primary with the secondary, these with the University institutions, and these again with other public buildings, the Post Office, the Customs office, the Banks, the Railway Station, the Museum and the Police courts and Police chawls. With the exception of the first, all these are palatial structures, more costly than they have a right to be. India is a poor country. The millions spent out of her revenues on these imposing edifices is an unwarranted waste of its resources. When this is done at the neglect of children's health and well-being, it is positively wrong and foolish. We overcrowd little growing buds of humanity in dirty, ill-ventilated, ill-lighted rooms up two or more flights of dusty stairs, in busy thoroughfares and noisy market-places, ruin their health, body, mind, and soul, and build magnificent courts of justice to try thieves, burglars, and felons. We are a wise state. We want machine-guns and aeroplanes to bring our country's military system in line with that of other countries! Isn't it time that we exercised a little of common sense, removed our children, who alone constitute India's true wealth, from those dingy pigeon-holes we call schools, to light and airy cottages, and provided increased accommodation in them for many more. We shall not need hospitals, jails, and asylums then.

An unconscious confession of our Universities' distrust of their own education is the appointment of supervisors at its examinations. Leaving the undergraduates aside, take the post graduates. In granting its valued degrees to these the University certified to their honesty and uprightness no less than their proficiency in the subjects prescribed. Why learned professors and tutors should be appointed at ten rupees or more per day to play the policeman while this body of honourable men and women does its papers, I fail to see. The appointment of supervising sergeants presupposes that, without them, the candidates would copy. Is that the opinion the University holds of its alumni? I expect I will be told that human nature is human nature, you cannot trust it where self-interest is involved. Precisely that brings us to the root of the whole matter. Our educational system is based on a false foundation—complete distrust of the child and hence of human nature. My own faith is that the child is born good and virtuous and shows himself worthy of trust when trusted. The school makes him bad. Distrusted by the teacher, the child distrusts him and what is worse, himself. If this were not so why should Tagore's pupils at Shantiniketan write their examination-papers honestly on tree-tops, or any where they like, without any of those ten-rupees-a-day professor policemen to supervise over them?

Talking of Shantiniketan, I have come across a beautiful passage in Mr. C. F. Andrews' book, "The Indian Problem" which I cannot help quoting:—

"The true education of ancient India, in the time of her highest aspirations, was not given amid the paraphernalia of great ugly buildings and cumbersome furniture, costing fabulous sums of money, but in the natural school rooms of the forest ashrams underneath the shady trees and in thatched mud cottages. Outwardly, there was every sign of poverty. But inwardly, there were reached, in those very forest schools, some of the highest flights of human thought to which mankind has ever attained. The ideal of the Brahmachari Ashram, the ideal of the forest hermitage, is not a dead ideal of the past. It is the very secret, so I fervently believe, of India's true national greatness in education. It is the secret which must be learnt afresh in the days of freedom which are now dawning." To comment on this is needless. The poetry of the passage is best enjoyed. Any comment will spoil its beauty.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### OUR DRAMAS, RASLILAS, AND SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS.

Of our Indian stage, I should repeat Hamlet's exhortation "O, reform it altogether." We are far behind the other nations in this respect. The chief faults of our Drama are :—

(a) Vulgarism. (b) Artificiality. (c) Ignorance of the play-wrights, the players, the play-goers. (d) Ugly Theatres. (e) The stage is not a national one. We ought to remedy these defects. The theatres ought to be more airy, commodious, bright and artistic. They ought to be situated in healthy and decent surroundings. The plots ought to be more cheerful, rational and instructive. Historical and mythological plays are a step in the right direction. But our Cinemas prove that we can have too much of these. We need light comedies which depict everyday life too. Plays like *Charlie's Aunt*, *French Leave*, *Shaw's Chocolate Soldier*, *Doctor's Dilemma*, are conspicuous by their absence. The tone and atmosphere too, need improvement. Coarse jokes, vulgar puns, and ribaldry, ought to yield place to sparkling wit, brilliant

sarcasm, witty repartee and gentle humour. Simplification is the key-note of reform. The dress, the scenery, and the acting should be more natural. The actors ought to "sue the action to the word, the word to the action." The problem of the stage resolves itself into a problem of education. Have we cultured play-wrights like Shaw, Galsworthy, Drinkwater, or our own immortal Kalidas? We do not hear of our play-wrights. The reason is obvious. They are not educated. So the players. These are generally a "backward" class, socially and educationally. They do not form a profession. Far from enjoying the popularity which English actors enjoy they are looked down upon by society. The proverbial taunt to a lazy, do-nothing sort of boy is "You will never do anything in life. Go and be a Natak—an actor." The actors receive no training whatsoever in their art. No wonder that our stage is not refined. It is not representative of Indian life. It is not National. How to reform it, is the question. I believe our schools and colleges could do very much to help a revival of our Drama. The success of educational institutions elsewhere is encouraging. The value of Drama as an important factor in education has been fully recognised in Europe and America. The prevailing opinion at the last summer conference of the "New Ideals of Education Society" in Britain,

was the same. The idea that the Drama is an aid to Self-expression and provides training in Aesthetics, has spread and "there are probably few schools now-a-days where some attempt at a dramatic representation of story, or ballad or fairy-tale is not attempted at least once a year. In some schools children are encouraged to write, as well as produce their own plays. The work of Mr. C. Cook, the enterprising teacher of the Perse School Cambridge, in teaching English through performance of Shakespeare's plays, has drawn considerable attention. In our own country too attempts of a similar nature have been made in recent years. Performance of the poet's plays, with the poet as a chief actor is a very commendable feature at Shantiniketan; while, at Benares lately, the pupils in a girls' school, enacted the part of Shri Krishna's childhood, improvising dialogue and groupings with the greatest ease and pleasure. But these are rare instances. A wider use of the drama in our schools is desirable. Indian children are generally shy, reserved, and self-conscious. They are gentle and reverent but they lack smartness, dash, address and deportment. Acting should help them to get rid of these defects. Amateur Dramatic Societies should be attached to every school and college and there is no reason why our Universities should not institute a Chair of Dramatics and grant degrees in acting.

So much about the Dramas ; but when I think of our good old Ras Lilas I really feel compelled to own that our forefathers were wiser than what we are. The Ras Lilas were truly educational. They were a cheap and effective means of popular education. They were Pageants of History. Mythology and Religion. Given a few smart actors who could recite the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, a few rupees' worth powder, paint and dressess and you had a travelling troupe of theatrical entertainers who could delight and instruct thousands of men, women and children in different parts of the city. You didn't need to book your seats in advance or buy them at a heavy premium at the time of the show. All that you were required to do was just to turn up to the show, remove your shoes, be careful to smuggle them in the carpeted floor and sit on them (to prevent any possibility of your having to walk back home barefooted), attend to the drama, be amused at lively Hanuman's tricks, and edified by Rama and Sita's love and devotion, give a piee, an anna or two or none in the collection plate, and return back when it is just passed midnight.

More popular still is another form of religious dance-entertainments known as "Bhagat" or Devotional singing. These are held in India to this day, especially in

the mofussil. Not very long ago I had an occasion to attend one of these and the impression left on my mind was that these entertainments were the best means of mass education. A school-children's club was celebrating the anniversary of its founder, a young college student whose saintliness of character, self sacrifice and devotion to the cause of Ahimsa which cost him his life have enshrined him in the hearts of his community. The members of the club decided to close the anniversary proceedings with a "Bhagat." They accordingly wrote to a saintly man, Lila by name, a tinker by vocation, an "inspired tinker" he, like John Bunyan. Lila lived in a village near by, was famous within a radius of 300 miles and had many calls upon his time, but he consented. The news spread throughout the city. Lila the saint was to commence his song recital and dance, his "Bhagat," at 11 P. M. in the compound of the local native school. An hour or two before the appointed time, hundreds of citizens hurried with their dinner of rice, vegetables, and mangoes, and squatted in prominent places on the carpeted floor. The saint didn't arrive till 12 midnight, the train being late. By that time thousands had flocked and seated themselves on the floor peaceably, the stars of a summer night shining over their heads. Women-visitors were seated apart in the verandah of the school-building.



Among the audience were Hindus, Mussulmans, Amils and Banyas, doctors, pleaders, professors, school-masters, editors, grocers, carpenters, weavers and coolies, a pell-mell crowd of the educated and the uneducated, the literate and the illiterate, the blue-blooded aristocrat and the humble workman. But the beauty of the spirit of the gathering lay in the fact that there, just for those few hours, they were all one. The audience was a perfect unity. The earthly differences were forgotten. Worship of God had united them and linked the otherwise varied elements into one whole. The audience extended beyond the school premises, for the neighbouring house-tops were crowded with women-folk who chose to hear and see from their own dwellings. At the arrival of the saint the whole audience stood up in reverence and returned his namashkar, for Lila was all humility and bowed to all and sundry with folded palms. The beauty about this "Sadhu" was that he was not a Sadhu. There was nothing in his person to show that he was one. No saffron-coloured garments, ash-besmeared face, no rosary, none of the trappings of Sadhuism of India.

Lila was accompanied by two friends who joined him in song and dance. Punctually at 12 midnight they wore the Indian religious dancer's cloak, tied a string of

shops and over housetops was taken up, for it was well-known that the pupils will enact a temperance drama from a roof top. I needn't forget the effigy of "Sharab," the Demon of Drink, which was carried through the bazaar mounted on a donkey, the burning of which in the school compound terminated an extremely joyous and profitable day.

School celebrations could be held in other ways too. Anniversary days of eminent Indians should serve as fitting occasions for a gathering. A school ought to share the dreams of the noblest sons of the soil. Celebrations centring round the life and work of great men like Asoka, Akbar, Nanak, Kabir, Shivaji, and Tukaram, should be truly educational in value. They should teach reverence for greatness and be a source of inspiration to young minds. Pride in India's past should kindle enthusiasm for glorious deeds in the future. This is not a novel idea. If other nations celebrate their great men's days, why not we ?

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and make them an influence for the betterment of society. Our Holi, Divali, Ganpati, and Id festivals, properly celebrated, could help to consolidate our national life and maintain its historic continuity. The schools could render immense help in this matter. I know of two large private high schools in a district town, whose annual Holi celebrations are an event eagerly looked-for by the townsmen. Nearly two decades ago, a saintly teacher, imbued with the spirit of a social servant, conceived the idea of a Boys' Band of Hope. The main object being Temperance. The members, teachers and pupils, pledged themselves to total abstinence. The propaganda was carried on throughout the year but the special celebration fell on the Holi day when the school was "At Home" to its past students, the parents, and the general public. The party spent the whole day in a local garden. Friendly talks, songs and musical concerts, athletic sports, meals and prize-giving filled up the time. In the evening the whole assembly formed in a Band of Hope Procession. The Principal, the Vice-Principal, some prominent ex-students and citizens walked in front of the long file of pupils who wore temperance badges, carried flags with suitable texts and sang temperance songs. Hours before their arrival, the bazaar was thronged with thousands of spectators. Every available space in the bazaar, on the

shops and over housetops was taken up, for it was well-known that the pupils will enact a temperance drama from a roof top. I needn't forget the effigy of "Sharab," the Demon of Drink, which was carried through the bazaar mounted on a donkey, the burning of which in the school compound terminated an extremely joyous and profitable day.

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## CHAPTER XI.

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### HYPNOTISM OF THE WEST.

We in India suffer woefully from a hypnotic influence. It is the hypnotic influence of the West. The evil effects of this are visible in our life but they are no where so clearly marked as in our educational system. It is in our schools that the seeds of denationalisation are first sown. These take a firm root in the plastic period of childhood and assume proportions in later life. Our educational system is entirely foreign. It is foreign in origin, foreign in sentiment, spirit, curriculum, and foreign in organisation. It is artificially implanted and will never take root in the soil. You may as well bring English cherries, tie them up with strings on mangoe trees and ask them to grow, as import a foreign system. It is true that hot-house plants are sometimes grown in nurseries but human souls are not hot-house plants? The present system externalizes the pupils' outlook on life. It makes him turn to things which have no connection whatever with his real self and depend upon them for his happiness. In Mr. Edmund Holmes's words "it draws him away from the main business of life, the business of living and growing, and makes him devote himself to matters of minor importance, to

doing (in the sense of producing outward and visible results), to seeming (in the sense of making an outward show and being valued accordingly), to acquiring, possessing, using, spending."\* The spirit of India is different. In our land the goal of education has always been to live and to grow, to make one's own being the prime care of life. Self-realisation through service has been recognised as the ideal of life. This the western educationists are beginning to perceive now.

The pivot of our present-day education is the examination-system with its inseparable corrolaries of rewards and punishments, bribes and threats, cram, sham, shallowness, superficiality, and hypocrisy. When passing of examinations is the goal, these are the short-cuts, the royal roads to it. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore happily hits off this when he says that if a candidate carried a book in the examination-hall he will be punished for copying, but thousands of them are rewarded for copying the books in their heads. This examination system is peculiarly a western intitution. We never had anything of its kind in India. With us education has never meant cramming bits of information to obtain a paper-degree and a clerk-ship. Knowledge, here, has always been sought for its own sake. It has never been "purchased with the loss of power."

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\* "Tragedy of Education," p. 17. (Constable.)

The tragedy is all the greater because the examination system thrives with us at a time when it is being thoroughly discredited in its own home as anti-educational. A system which exacts mechanical obedience from the pupil, and reduces him to a role of passivity cannot but be so. In the days of the Guru and Chella system, the relationship between the pupils and teachers was different. It was not that the pupil merely learnt by heart what the teacher told him. The pupil was a questioner, a "doubt-raiser." His very name indicated that. The method of learning was Socratic, more or less. The spirit of intellectual inquiry and research, of original thought, was encouraged. The unit in education was each individual pupil, and the teacher's function was to help him to grow harmoniously, in body, mind and soul. There were no collective examinations, large unwieldy classes. Reading out or dictating a lecture to a class of two or three hundred college students is not education. A gramophone machine could do that and, perhaps do it better. But, *no* *tolence* *tolence*, we must have this lecturing because, have not Oxford and Cambridge got this system? I believe none of our countrymen has demonstrated the folly and danger of this servile imitation of the West more forcibly than our poet, Rabindranath Tagore. He has shown how, whenever the word University is

mentioned, the Indian mind, suffering from a hypnotic spell, thinks only of Oxford and Cambridge, as if knowledge was the sole monopoly of England !

We had our own universities in the past, famous centres of learning at Taxilla, Kashi, and other places, but we never think of these. Pride in our past is entirely absent. We ape foreign ways and fail miserably. The Indian student is docile, gentle, and reverent, both by temperament and by tradition. But the new system has metamorphosed him into something entirely different, till you can hardly recognise him as his old self. Stamping furiously in the class, hissing at professors, pelting them with paper-balls, fruits, and copper coins, is that what we mean by education ? The staff and students behave towards each other as if their interests were antagonistic ? Not a day passes but it brings reports of an unfortunate happening in some institution or the other, a strike here, a fracas or a quarrel there. Why blame any one ? It is the system which makes such things possible. Far different was the spirit of old when the pupils sat reverently at the feet of their masters under some forest-glades or by the side of a babbling brook, when cottage homes of the gurus were always open to their pupils as to sons, friends, or fellow learners. Far different was the spirit of the Ashramas of old when the teachers



welcomed the new disciples thus "Thou art the son of the glorious Sun, the great God who is the giver of life and intelligence. Be thou a Brahmachari of Brihaspati, the God of Knowledge and Dharma. Prepare to purify thyself, to sacrifice thine all. Fill thy life with action and knowledge" The forest-dwelling masters and pupils sought "to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man" and "to perceive the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit, whose power creates the earth, the sky, and at the same time irradiates our minds with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world."\*

The foreign spirit dominates our education in more ways than one. We see it in the subordination of the vernaculars to English, with its accompanying superstition that only those are educated who know English, the rest do not count, in the neglect of our Art, Music, Folk-lore, handicrafts, and the best literature of the land. The system has created a new and exclusive caste, the caste of the English-knowing Indians, that small 5% which is deluded into thinking that they alone constitute India. Our universities divide kith and kin. We

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\* "Sadhana" by Rabindranath Tagore, page 9 (Macmillan.)

force our children to learn their subjects through a foreign language. In some schools I notice that even the vernacular is taught through English. At this rate, we shall have to wait long before we have another Kalidasa, Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram or Tagore. English children are encouraged not only to read the best literature of the land but to write their own original stories, poems, and plays in their mother tongue. Some of these were read out in a London Training College and highly appreciated. Do our schools ever encourage pupils to endeavours of this nature? Our students seldom or never compose in their vernaculars. It is considered more dignified, more fashionable to write in English even though the results seldom excel what I got at a college, and which I quote for the benefit of the reader :—

“ Oh ! how I long to be in Bombay,  
 To walk along the Back Bay.  
 I shall go to Poona by mail,  
 On the station, lots of oranges for sale,  
 Then I shall go to the Parvati Hills,  
 Also to the paper mills. ”

Simple vernacular prose would have been far better than this “ poetry ” !

Our students know more of Macaulay, Froude, and Tennyson than they do of Vasishta, Patanjali, or Bhavabhuti. Transport a body of Indian Pundits to Oxford and Cambridge, Eton and Harrow, with powers to substitute Sanskrit and Arabic for Latin and Greek; Hindustani for English; to teach Milton and Shakespeare through Marathi, Bengalee, or Urdu; let the Tabla, Sarangi and the Sitar take the place of the piano, the organ, and the violin; Atta Pata, Khokho, and Gili-Danda the place of cricket, football, and hockey; and you denationalise England as completely as it has done India.

We have laboured under delusions long enough. It is time we shook off this hypnotism of the West.

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The examination of these defects, which follows, is a masterpiece of brevity and of close reasoning, and is a clear and moderately-worded statement. The instruction imparted in our schools is unfamiliar in sentiment. The subject-matter of the text-books is foreign to the learners. To quote Mahatma's own words they deal "not with things the boys and girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers." Our children know more of the coal and

medium.

(3) Real education is impossible through a foreign

and confines itself simply to the head.

(2) It ignores the culture of the heart and the hand

entire exclusion of indigenous culture.

(1) It is based upon foreign culture to the almost

existing system:—

In his article on "National Education," contained in the issue of "Young India," dated the 1st September, 1921, Mahatma Gandhi sets forth his views on national education. He finds the following three main defects in the existing system:—

## GANDHI AND EDUCATION.

### CHAPTER XII.

iron mines of England than is good for them. Their ignorance of matters nearer home, which have a great bearing on their life, is a sad tragedy of Indian life. A little Indian child in Standard IV learns about Robert Bruce and Joan of Arc. It wearies him to death to learn the pronunciations of English words. The lessons afford no joy to him. Haven't we a rich and varied literature of our own? But, as a vernacular saying has it, "They have their homes on the river bank but still they are thirsty—the ignorant ones." I remember once in a Training College a progressive teacher brought Toru Dutt's poems for his demonstration lesson, as a revolt against the text-books in use. He chose for his lesson a poem entitled "Dhruva." The lesson was highly successful. I have seldom heard a lesson which created so much interest and enthusiasm. With rapt attention, for very nearly an hour, the boys learnt the story of the little God Prince, his piety and devotion, self-sacrifice and renunciation. There was a perceptible glow of joy on their faces when Dhruva, consoling his mother that worldly things did not last and so he cared not for his father's throne, said, "Let Uttama, my brother, but not thy son, reign, O mother!" It is obvious that it was the familiarity of sentiment and the spirit of the story which evoked response.

The existing system unfits boys and girls for manual work in after-life and Mahatmaji rightly terms it a crime. One would wish that those responsible for the system knew a little more of the geography of India. If they did so they would realise that India is an agricultural country; hence her sons cannot afford to despise labour. English education has made hatred of manual work fashionable.

The student class, specially the University men and women, hate manual labour and carry snobbery to an extent that excites the just contempt and ridicule of the elderly members of society. These last, very naturally, blame English education for this. The old formula of Western education was the three R's—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. The new mantra is 3 H's—the head, the heart, and the hand; but the system in India, as Mahatma Gandhi has pointed out, takes no account of the last two. It "confuses itself simply to the head." Not even that, for it is only memory, a part of the head, which is hypertrophied to the cost of the other faculties. We give only a fragment of education to a fragment of the child. For the training of the hand Mahatmaji suggests hand-spinning and hand-weaving. This was an occupation considered as worthy of queens in ancient India and the Charakha adorned nearly every home. Its revival

in modern times cannot but prove a blessing, more particularly to our poorer brethren in the villages, an idea of whose economic distress has been furnished to us by the splendid work done among them by a true knight, Sir P. C. Ray.

The educational value of the Charkha cannot be exaggerated. Handicraft belongs to those creative activities "which constitute the solid tissue of civilization."\* Weaving, carving lettering are aesthetic forms of it, while carpentry and needle-work are constructional. The benefits of manual training are so simply stated by the Mahatma that one cannot do better than quote him.

"The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralise the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour."

The heart is an important factor in education and Mahatma's reference to its neglect is timely. Man has neglected heart-culture. He has become too clever to live

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\* "Education—Its Data and First Principles" by Dr. T. P. Nunn, P. 211 (Arnold.)



in peace with his neighbours. He had become an "intellectual east of clay" as Tennyson would say. He has harnessed the earth, air, and water to his uses. He has harnessed the Niagara falls and is going to erect a Barrage at Sulkur. But what about that little stream of energy in his own breast, known as the heart? If he could only understand its mystery, regulate its beats and wisely direct its energy, there should be no more wars, no more misery in the world. Broadly stated, the problem of the world is the problem of the heart.

The sage of Sabarmati offers no hints or guidance as to the education of the heart beyond the one that "it can only be done through the living touch of the teacher." I should have been glad to have heard Gandhi! at greater length, and in fuller detail on a subject like this. The teacher's personality counts for much. His sympathy and love are a transforming influence in the life of the pupils. But he is more serviceable if he knows methods which help culture of the heart. The spirit of competition between pupil and pupil, which the present system encourages, might be avoided and the healthier one of cooperation substituted in its place. The right to help a weaker brother with his lessons should be prized as a rare privilege by a scholar. Art, music, and dancing, which are left out of our curriculum entirely, have an

important bearing on the training of emotions, and should find a place in our schools. Musical concerts and our beautiful country dances—the Garbas—should be revived. In the elementary stage, tending of school pets, a parrot, rabbits or a goat, flowers and plants, may be found helpful. I know of an English school where the death of the school “Bunny”, the rabbit, was an event of equal importance as the death of a pupil. The funeral was observed in solemn silence by the teachers and the pupils, and the school was closed in memory of the deceased comrade and playmate.

The medium of instruction must be the vernacular. There cannot be any two opinions about it. We have discussed, the question in a previous chapter (Hypnotism of the West) and cannot do better than let Mahatmaji speak in his beautiful style. “The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars.” So it has and the sooner we wake up to this fact the better it would be for our country. All these faults and others which are present in the system are curable. Suppose this were done *i. e.* the indigenous culture were restored to its own, the culture of the heart and the hand were attended to, the vernacular was made the medium

of instruction, would Mahatma Gandhi accept the existing schools? No. His basis is political. "In my humble opinion, it is a sin for the nation to receive education in schools financed by or under the influence or control of the Government. I have therefore no hesitation in advising immediate destruction of these institutions at all cost," says Gandhi.

I think the problem of our country's education must be approached in a practical, business-like manner. Estimate the number of schools and colleges all over India, their total cost, the number of pupils attending these, the number of teachers employed who would be thrown out were these institutions destroyed, realise the fact that the millions spent are India's money and that India is not a rich country, and then decide whether it would help us in any way to break away from these entirely! But I welcome the spirit of revolt in matters educational, for that has made us think. We are dissatisfied with the present system. That alone is a sign of health, of hope for the future. Satisfaction is death or, as Mr. O'Neill expresses it admirably, "Finality is a false lure, it is death in education. Ceaseless change, growth, is the one thing constant." The changes introduced by the National Schools are bound to react upon the other schools. In my humble opinion, the solution of India's

educational problem lies in retaining the existing institutions, purging them of the faults discussed in the fore-going pages, nationalising them gradually, in starting schools and colleges of different types professedly experimental in their nature and through voluntary effort, and in organising the national schools on a sound basis freeing them as much as possible from active politics. A spirit of healthy emulation and friendly co-operation could unite all these apparently rival institutions into an educational body whose one object will be to provide training which will encourage among the pupils the spirit of inquiry and research, which will help their all-sided growth, of the heart and the hand no less than the head, which will make them self-reliant and resourceful, foster their special gifts and talents, kindle in them a desire for service, make the habit of subordinating personal good to the good of the country instinct in them ; in other words help them to attain the goal of their life, *Self-realisation through Service*.

THE END.

## Is India a Conquered Country? And If So, What Then?

This booklet of Miss Annas only contains a graphic account of a soul-stirring debate in which stalwart English friends of Indian freedom took part and thundered on behalf of the roughly down-trodden masses of India. It is highly spoken of by the Press of India, and the public has received it warmly. The booklet abounds in such sentiments as are given below:—

Modern political science, from the time of Montesquien's immortal 'Spirit of Laws,' down to Austin's 'Jurisprudence,' and Twiss's 'Law of Nations,' knows nothing of a dominant race, whether dominion be claimed on the ground of conquest, or on the ground of some alleged superiority, inherent or acquired, of intellect, morals, or creed. In deciding on admission to all branches of the public service, and to a direct share in the government, there must be no discrimination of blood or lineage, the personal qualifications of individuals must alone be considered.

Now the word "prestige" is one of those unhappy words which have been bandied about from one part of the world to another, which everyone mentions with a certain amount of shame and discomfery, and of which it is very difficult to know the exact meaning; but that any prestige, either of government or an individual, can be in any way prejudiced by open and honest dealing, I for one cannot bring myself to believe.

The discussion on the Indian budget in the House of Commons every year is a mere sham—not a more sham because a sufficient number of people do not take interest in the budget, but legally a sham, and which shame would be just as great a sham if the budget were listened to by 400 instead of 40.

We are glad to inform our readers that we shall shortly publish a stirring book entitled

## **“The Struggle for Power in India”**

written by one of the best English  
Advocates of Indian Independence—

**Bernard Houghton.**



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BOMBAY.**